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ABSTRACT

The Head Start Supplementary Training Program offered college education and training opportunities to Head Start employees in order to enable them to become more skilled and responsible staff members and to increase their earning power and job security. The training program offered academic programs leading to Associate of Arts and Bachelor of Arts degrees and provided opportunities to postsecondary institutions to expand and develop curricula and methods. The program functioned in 250 institutions and 7,000 employees received training since 1967. Evaluations of representative colleges and universities showed that the philosophy of the program was sound and was being implemented. Descriptive data were collected through questionnaires completed by program trainees in Detroit, Wayne and Macomb counties in Michigan. Additional data were collected from interviews and reviews of relevant literature. Findings indicated that individuals in the program experienced personal growth but that the greatest academic gains were made by those who were involved with additional programs outside of Head Start Supplementary Training. Reevaluation of the program is necessary so it can be modified to assist trainees in attaining long-range academic goals within shorter periods of time. (MK)

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HEAD START SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING:

DECADE OF HOPE OR DESPAIR

Necia Harkless

The past decade has been characterized as one of hope for many of the thousands of families that have broken the poverty cycle and one of despair for the others who are still entrapped within that cycle. Within this decade, the federal government began its massive attack on the lag in development and education of young children. Simultaneously, there appeared an increasing number of studies by psychologists and educators on the effect of early experience in human development. Many theories and research findings emerged confirming the maximal growth rate of children during the first five years of life and the influence of environmental factors on later development.¹

Proponents of preschool compensatory education based their assumptions upon the research suggesting that the cycle of poverty could be broken by intervention. Project Head Start was to become one of the vanguards in the War Against Poverty mandated in the summer of 1965. Barbara Bates (1968) indicated that Project Head Start attempted to compensate for the inequities in our society and to provide a backdrop wherein each child could develop to his or her potential and provide of development for the family. This backdrop consisted of medical, dental services and nutritional care for

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children; involved parents through employment and training; tapped the social and psychological services within the community to enrich and improve the lives of families; and to provide those enrichment programs so necessary for the social, emotional and intellectual growth of the young child.

An aura of despair was generated by the pessimistic attitudes and the wars that raged and are still being waged on the battlefield of compensatory education. Edmund W. Gordon (1970) made some biting comments about compensatory education as he indicated that

... despite the expenditure of at least \$75 million on evaluations and special research projects and more than \$10 billion invested in the education of the poor, we are still not able to make definitive statements concerning the value of compensatory education.²

He states that

... hard data are needed; solid research studies are required as a basis for policy decisions. We have an abundance of indefinite, conflicting, and confusing studies. The value of compensatory education may be obfuscated, in part, because the practice of evaluative research is poor. The weaknesses in the application of evaluative research..... partially stems from the complex political and economic circumstances under which these programs were initiated and developed.³

HEAD START SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINING PROGRAM

Head Start Supplementary Training which grew out of the need for staff and professional growth offered a ray of hope in a seeming sea of despair. The full impact of this statement can readily be seen through the national objectives of Head Start Supplementary Training Program and in the outcome of a Detroit study of a Head Start Supplementary Trainees

which are generalizable nationally.

The objectives of the Head Start Supplementary Training program under the auspices of the Office of Economic Opportunity and later the Department of Health, Education and Welfare fulfill three basic purposes:

1. To provide college education and training to fulfill year Head Start employees so that they may become more skilled and responsible in the Head Start work.
2. To provide these same people with an opportunity for increased earning power and job security.
3. To provide an arena for college and university change in teaching methods and curricula which will affect institutional changes to meet the needs of low income people.

To accomplish these objectives, Supplementary Training offers three opportunities:

1. For those who have had little formal education, academic training is offered leading to the two year Associate of Arts Degree and Advanced degrees.
2. For those who have had some college work, a Bachelor of Arts degree can be obtained in child development and related fields.
3. For colleges and universities, opportunities exist to change academic requirements and develop new curricula and new methods of instruction in child development, community development, inter-group relations, psychological services and similar fields.

Since the Head Start Supplementary Training program was inaugurated in 1967, more than 7,000 Head Start employees have received training which permitted them to achieve a degree of upward mobility which could not have been possible without the program.

An evaluation of representative programs in various parts found the basic philosophy sound and its implementation in a variety of developmental stages. Some programs were highly creative while others were traditional

in approach. The innovative practices included on site classes, release time, creative workshops, seminars, video-taped sessions, roleplaying, simulation, problem solving techniques, group/individual counseling and a wide use of consultants. The trainees career goals reflected the components of the Head Start program. You will find such choices as cook, nurse, community health worker, teacher, social worker, dietician, psychologist, child guidance worker or child development associate.

To date the Head Start Supplementary program is administered in over 250 colleges and universities in the United States including Alaska and Hawaii. A new life style has been affected by many of the trainees and there is evidence that the academic work taken by the trainees has had a positive effect on other members of the family. A study was conducted of the trainees in the Head Start Supplementary Training Program at Wayne State University to determine the impact of training on their lives.

*PROFILE ANALYSIS: HEAD START

SUPPLEMENTARY TRAINEE

The purpose of the study was two-fold:

1. To determine the degree of personal growth of the Head Start Supplementary Trainee, and to examine the persistent personal characteristics revealed in their profiles.
2. To collect descriptive data in the program on institutional change.

The literature on the training and utilization of paraprofessionals in early childhood education is scant. Most previous studies have sought to answer questions broadly related to the selection, role definition, utilization of aides, task analysis and the general status of the teacher movement

*Unpublished dissertation, Necia Harkless Coker, Wayne State University, 1974

at the elementary level. The Wayne State University study attempted to capture the humanistic aspect of the Head Start Supplementary trainee through lens focused on the individual reflected in a profile of four dimensions: personal, education, work and enrichment. The trainees represented preschools and day care centers from the Head Start programs administered by the Detroit Public Schools, Catholic Services Community Head Start, Wayne County and Macomb County Head Start including Project Follow Thru and Parent Child Project.

The profile analysis form was mailed to 168 trainees who had participated in the program with a 43 percent return. In order to highlight the motivational patterns, persistence in goal attainment, and identify characteristics which were dominant in the "success syndrome", a semi-structured taped interview was developed and administered to eight of the respondents. To reinforce the semi-structured interview a short biographical sketch was requested. Criteria for selection was based on (1) membership in one of the subgroups (2) educational attainment and (3) promotion in job or scholarship award for academic work. Anonymity assured the reliability of responses.

Documentation on institutional change was derived from all available documents, reports, correspondence and statements from key personnel. To preserve the descriptive quality of the study, quantification and analysis are numerical and anecdotal. Summaries in tables were derived from the responses in the profile analysis form and mini-case studies were derived from interview and biographical sketches.

When Head State Supplementary Training Program was being initiated at Wayne State, it was asserted that none would take advantage of the program

and it was doomed as another exercise in futility. There were those persons who had lost faith in the system and failed to respond sufficiently to prove the worth of the program to themselves. Those who were willing to try in spite of the aura of despair within their communities that attempted to overtake them persisted. The following two case studies are examples of that persistence.

Interviewee #2 Career Development Coordinator

Background Information

Male, Negro American
Age: 20-30; Birthplace: South-city; Siblings: 3-6
Parentage: Birthplace: South-country; father: age 51-60
 mother: age 46-50
Marital Status: Married; no children
Education: High school graduate; B.A., Wayne State, 1973
 Parents: 9-12 grade
Employment: Factory; Head Start 4-6 years
Community Involvement: Parent Council, YWCA, Block Club
Residence: Michigan, 6-10 years

Responses to Semi-structured Interview

1. What was your strongest motivation in returning to school?

There were certain times when I had no desire to continue in school because I figured that the subjects were too hard and I didn't want anymore failure. After the first quarter in HSST, I made passing grades and this was my initial motivation. There were other reasons: (1) The director gave me inspiration through brief talks, understanding and not pressing me because I was a little slow in some areas; (2) I knew that she was interested in my going on, since she was willing to help me. I wanted to show that I was improving with the counseling that she was giving me; (3) The pace that she was going was the same as mine. The more that I accomplished, the more areas she would ask me to improve in.

2. What would you consider your most significant experience while in HSST?

Learning how to deal with children and how to be creative in helping them. Things that I really enjoyed was The Community in Action Class, working with clay and the mini-skits that we wrote and videotaped.

3. What was your most disappointed experience?

... that I didn't make more A's in the classes I took.

4. What effect did your training have on your family?

Once I started and began progress, my wife registered at the University of Detroit. My oldest brother began training for Burger King. Another brother registered at Wayne recently. My sister wanted to make some type of accomplishment, so she went to driver's school and my mother got her driving license.

5. What is your aspiration for the future?

To get a Master's degree and get a job in the field that I study.

Interviewee #8, Social Aide

Background Information

Female, Afro-American

Age: 31-40; Birthplace: North-City; Siblings: 7-9

Parentage: Birthplace: South-country; father, deceased; mother, age: 61-70

Marital status: Married; no children under five

Education: High school graduate; M.S.W. Wayne State, June 1974

Parents: 9-12

Employment: Clerical; Head Start 7-8 years

Community Involvement: Career Development Committee, Head

Start Committee, Church, Block Club Credit Union

Residence, over 25 years

Responses to Semi-Structured Interview

1. What was your strongest motivation in returning to school?

My first opportunity for continuing my education came from MESCC (Michigan Employment Social Securities Commission). Twenty persons were selected to be trainees as counselor aides for TAAP (Total Action Against Poverty) and attended Wayne State

for sixteen weeks in the counselor program in 1964. My second opportunity came when the director of TAAP selected me to attend Merrill Institute in a home management program for twelve weeks in 1965. The third opportunity was in 1966 when the director of AOP (Archdiocesan Opportunity Program) selected me to attend leadership training at Bowling Green State University. My fourth opportunity came through the HSST core courses in 1968 (this was the first I was to receive college for any of my training); basic courses at Wayne County Community College; six week training at Marygrove and finally transfer to Wayne State Graduate School of Social on a scholarship in 1972.

The positions I held as a result of my educational training are as follows: counselor aide, home management aide, supervisory teacher, Career Development Coordinator, consultant for State Training and Assistance and community assistant at Merrill Palmer Institute.

2. What was your most significant experience while in HSST?

I think that my most significant experience in the HSST program was one that allowed me to continue consecutively in my educational training in a program which offered transferable credit enabling me to transfer over to graduate school because of my experience. I was accepted in an experimental program without my B.A. I have been able to maintain a 3.58 average which justifies their acceptance of me.

3. What was your most disappointing experience?

My most frustrating experience was one in relation to the Career Development component of the Head Start program which was designed to set up vertical and horizontal movement within the program after obtaining a given amount of training or credit hours. This led to a road block. People were accumulating hours faster than the agency was ready to reassign persons on a lattice in order for persons to acquire the opportunity to move up and out of the program.

4. What effect has your training on your family?

I think it had a tremendous effect on my family. My training gave me more insight in how to motivate my children. Also, mainly, it enabled me to help them with their lessons and helped them to recognize its importance.

5. What is your aspiration for the future?

I will be graduating in June 1974 and my goal is to go back to an agency where people are trying themselves. Or I would try to obtain a placement in a political setting to improve legislation for people such as my self, lobbying for either child care or career opportunities in the inner city.

FINDINGS

The findings from the data are grouped according to the basic assumptions in the study:

Assumption: Benefits are derived from aides in the classroom by providing meaningful employment which contributes to their own development and the needs of society.

1. Thirty-one percent of the respondents were housewives and 11 percent received Aid to Dependent Children assistance or welfare.
2. Aides achieved a degree of economic stability. Findings indicate employment in Head Start for a period of four to eight years. Earning capacity increased with each year of employment from \$1.25 to \$4.35 an hour depending upon which program one was involved in.
3. Opportunity for upward mobility within the program was available although limited by funds and other factors.
4. Many new skills were acquired that were put to immediate use on the job and in the community when requested as well as in the home.
5. Trainees became more involved with community affairs.
6. The number of options in recreation, hobbies, and travel was increased.

Assumption: Benefits are derived from aides in the classroom for family life, by giving them, many of whom will be parents, the opportunity to learn child development principles in real life situations.

1. Respondents had the opportunity to attend classes in colleges of their own choice and to complete academic goals. Thirty-two students received certificates ranging from GED to MSW in a period of five years.
2. Classes most popular and rewarding for the respondents' own self esteem and benefit were the "Young Child Nutrition," "Community in Action," and "Head Start Skills and Practices."
3. Several training programs available gave other options for self development and advancement, such as the Career Opportunities program.

Assumption: Benefits are derived from aides in the classroom for the community at large by providing a means through unemployed and disadvantaged persons may enter into the mainstream of productivity.

1. All respondents are gainfully employed in the Head Start program and have been so for a sustained period of time.
2. One respondent completed his MSW and is employed as a social worker in a large city agency.
3. Another respondent completed his B.A. and promoted to Career Development coordinator.
4. Several respondents expect to receive their degrees and receive employment as probationary teachers this fall.

The findings for the semi-structured interviews and the profiles reveal

the following persistent characteristics:

1. The majority of the respondents are married, southern-born women between the ages of 41 and 50 who have raised their families; a high school graduate; employed in Head Start for 4 to 8 years; earning between \$2.70 and \$4.35 per hour; a B-average student; and involved in church and community affairs.
2. Strongest motivations for returning to school revealed the following factors in common: opportunity to go to school; awareness of need for better education; encourage HSST staff; desire to serve others.
3. Effect on family: positive effect; learning experience shared at home; change in behavior of self and other family members; more insight in dealing with family members; increased awareness of family needs within the home, school, and community; more community participation because of skills acquired.
4. Future aspirations: commitment to early childhood education; commitment to remaining in the community and helping others; commitment to personal self renewal.

Findings on institutional change fall in four areas:

1. Inter-intra institutional interaction at the diffusion level
2. Impact on trainees
3. Courses and mode of instruction geared to students' needs and experiential level
4. Services to community: instructional, technical assistance, distribution and exchange of material.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Although the findings indicate a considerable measure of personal growth for the individuals in the program, it is evident that the trainees who achieved the greatest gains academically were in programs in addition to Head Start Supplementary Training. This points up the need for a re-evaluation of the program.

With the present design, a trainee could conceivably take ten years to achieve the long range goal to become a teacher or professional in the field of human services. The middle range goal, that of an Associate of Arts degree, was achieved in five years. The sense of achievement and the fruits of encouragement cannot be sustained over such a long period of time without the sense of hopelessness developing. This feeling in turn could effect the learning climate in the classroom and the home. The only alternative is a program where the student has an opportunity to take more hours a semester such as the Career Opportunity program where a student can take forty-five quarter or thirty semester hours a year while employed in the classroom or other programs designed with these options.

SUMMARY BEYOND THE FINDINGS

The humanistic dimension was the prevailing factor throughout this study. It is hoped that beyond the raw data one can reconstruct the common myths that prevail when one is looking at, investigating, or hypothesizing about the socially different. The literature of the fifties and the sixties was replete with the negative expectations of children and parents in the inner-city. It spoke of the broken homes, the instability in the family; lack of a male model, insufficient reading material and other objects

important in intellectual stimulation; negative self image; poor language skills; the inability to delay gratification and plan for the future.

The seventies represent a different picture, especially for the Head Start Supplementary trainees. From all indications, the trainees had an untapped potential in terms of a positive self image, resourcefulness and unfulfilled dreams. Given the opportunity to set realistic goals for themselves and their families through a program of Head Start for their children or children in their community and a Supplementary Training program for upgrading their academic and personal skills while pursuing a meaningful job, the trainees have proven that one of their prime needs was the availability of a program that recognized their potential and sought to develop it; they could do the rest.

One of the trainees has summed up the experiences of many of the trainees as she gave of herself in the following poem. It also suggests to educators and others in the helping professions the significance of their roles in releasing the pent up dreams and hopes locked within each of the students they attempt to reach.

I laid a dream aside one day
For other things to do
And through the years I've often thought
Do dreams come to you?
Many years have passed me by
And many things I've done
And how today as you can see
That dream at last I've won
Let not the dream deferred just die
The waste cannot compare
Within a given sphere.

For this involves the minds and lives
Of children yet to be
Who will depends on many dreams
Of people such as me.⁵

NOTES

1. B. Bloom, Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964).
2. Edmund W. Gordon, "Compensatory Education: Evaluation in Perspective," IRCD Bulletin, Vi, 5 (December, 1970).
3. Ibid.
4. Annual Report (1969) Head Start Supplementary Training Program, Educational Projects, Incorporated, (Washington, D.C: Head Start Supplementary Training, 1969), pp. 4-5.
5. Printed with Permission of Corrine Davis, poet.